



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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India: Airport security screening for passengers departing on international flights  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In 27 April 2009 correspondence, the Security Manager of Air India in Toronto stated the following in regard to airport security screening for passengers departing on international flights:

... when the passenger approaches the check-in counter, his/her travel documents, such as passport, visa, ticket, etc. are checked by an airline check-in agent to verify the genuineness of the [documents] prior to the issuance of a boarding card.

After obtaining the boarding card, the passenger goes through immigration checks where his/her passport/visa is thoroughly screened and their biographical data are stored into the computer by the government immigration officials. And, at this stage the passenger's data is matched with the suspected criminal databank.

The Security Manager also stated that these screening procedures are generally similar at all airports (27 April 2009).

The Bengaluru International Airport [Bangalore] website has a "security and passport control" section for international flight passengers that states that passengers, after acquiring their boarding pass, must proceed to the emigration check area where they are to complete "Visa formalities," after which they can proceed to the "international security control area," and then to the departure area (n.d.). Specific information on the security screening procedures within the emigration check area or the international security control area is not available on this airport website.

Further information on airport security screening for departing international flight passengers could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate; however, the following information on airport security may be of interest.

A report available on the Ministry of Civil Aviation government website states that the Ministry of Civil Aviation is responsible for civil aviation safety and security (India n.d.a, 1). The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) functions under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and is responsible for aviation security at all civil airports in the country (India n.d.a, 5).

The following is a summary of the functions of the BCAS:

1.8.1 The Bureau ensures the aviation security standards in compliance of National and International obligations under National Aviation Security (AVSEC) Programme and various Conventions and Treaties of IATA [International Air Transport Association], ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization], ICPO [International Criminal Police Organization] etc. to which India is a signatory.

1.8.2 The Bureau is headed by Commissioner of Security (Civil Aviation), who is also the designated 'Appropriate Authority' in India, in compliance of Annex 17 of ICAO's Chicago Convention, to formulate and implement the National AVSEC Programme.

1.8.3 The Bureau has four regional offices and four Bomb Detection and Disposal Squads at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai and five Dog Squads. It issues orders, instructions and guidelines from time to time to State/Union Territory Police, CISF [Central Industrial Security Force], airport authorities and air carriers, about various measures to be undertaken to prevent hijacking, any terrorist activities and unlawful interference in Aviation.

1.8.4 The Bureau also undertakes programmes for training security personnel, X-ray screeners, employees (Indian & foreign) of Airlines, cargo operators, airport operators, crew and employees of other agencies operating in Civil Aviation Field. The training involves advance aviation security aspects, security related equipment & systems familiarization and operation details, testing and certification of personnel, especially the screeners.

1.8.5 The Bureau has set up an Airport Security Committee at the international and domestic airports including those under the control of Defence services which have civil enclaves. There is an Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation Security at the national level to advise on matters relating to civil aviation security and to facilitate policy decisions. It consists of senior officers of the concerned Ministries/Departments/Organizations and is chaired by the Secretary Ministry of Civil Aviation.

1.8.6 The officers of BCAS ensure the aviation security through inspections, regular security audits and imparting training to all concerned. The officers are ICAO trained trainers. The Bomb Detection & Disposal Squads & Dog Squads at four Metro Airports and Srinagar Airport ensure regular dummy checks, drills and IED detection and disposal training in this area, anti-sabotage checks of unclaimed baggage etc.

1.8.7 BCAS maintains close liaison with international agencies like IATA, ICPO, INTERPOL and ICAO for assessing threats as also for upgrading aviation security in the country at par with international standards. (India n.d.a, 5-6)

According to the BCAS website, there are "standardized security screening procedures for all airports in the country" (India n.d.b). The BCAS website does not outline these standard security screening procedures; however, the website does display an employee training syllabus that includes sections on X-ray imaging, security control of baggage, passenger profiling and questioning techniques (India 8 Mar. 2008).

In a 10 March 2009 article, the *Asian Security Review* reports that as a result of the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, which caused "heightened terror threats" at Indian Airports, plans to "enhance the supervisory powers of the ... BCAS" were being considered. The article further states that the BCAS supervises airport security, including the activities of the CISF - "a paramilitary force providing security to industrial units all across India" - state police forces and fire brigades (*Asian Security Review* 10 Mar. 2009).

The Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport [Kolkata] website states that in order to strengthen security at airports, CISF personnel have been brought in to serve as airport security and "state-of-the-art X-Ray baggage inspection systems" have been installed (n.d.). The website also states that "CCTV surveillance system[s]" have been installed at "sensitive airports" (Netaji International Airport n.d.). In regard to future security advancements, the website indicates that "[p]erimeter security and surveillance systems, [and] smart cards for access control to vital installations at airports are also being considered for introduction ... at sensitive airports" (ibid.).

In a 25 November 2008 article, *The Hindu* reported that additional staff were going to be added to the CISF unit at Coimbatore Airport. The article indicates that airport security manpower is dictated by the "number of aircraft, hours of operation, passenger movement and number of buildings and the gates that need to be manned" (*The Hindu* 25 Nov. 2008). According to the article, the approval of CISF personnel increases was coordinated by the CISF, AAI and BCAS (ibid.).

Several news sources indicate that airport security is enhanced during periods of increased security risk in India (IndianExpress.com 2 Dec. 2008; *Times of India* 5 Dec. 2008; Reuters 30 Jan. 2009). IndianAirports.com states that "the level of security will be calibrated by the BCAS according to the threat perception at any point of time" (n.d.). A 30 January 2009 Reuters article reports that, following the Mumbai attacks, intelligence agencies released a series of "hijack alerts" to India's major airports and CISF authorities responded by increasing security.

A 2 December 2008 IndianExpress.com article indicates that CISF personnel at the Mumbai airport introduced new security measures during a security alert that followed the "terror attacks," though officials were reportedly not willing to discuss the details of these measures. A 5 December 2008 *Times of India* article similarly reports on the increased security at the Bengaluru International Airport [Bangalore] due to the threat of "a possible terror strike." The article reports that vehicles were stopped and checked before entering the terminal area and additional CISF personnel were deployed to assist police outside the airport (*Times of India* 5 Dec. 2008). Additionally, before boarding the aircraft, passengers had to traverse an "extra security cordon" (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** The High Commission of India in Ottawa, the Airport Authority of India (AAI), the Airport Sector of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the Head of Security at the Bengaluru International Airport [Bangalore] did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response. Attempts to contact the Consulate-General of India in Toronto were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** Airport Authority of India (AAI), Airport International, *Asia Times* [Hong Kong], Aviation India, Aviation Security International, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Bureau of Immigration in India, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Cable News Network (CNN) International, Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport [Mumbai], Cochin International Airport, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, India Defence Monitor, Indira Gandhi International Airport [New Delhi], INTERPOL, McGill University Institute of Air and Space Law, Ministry of External Affairs India, Ministry of Home Affairs India, Travel Information Manual (TIM), United Nations (UN) Refworld.

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